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Evaluation

Annual report on evaluation in UNDP in 2008

Summary

The present annual report covers the period from March 2008 to February 2009. Chapter 1 reports on evaluation coverage, compliance, quality, resources and capacity; the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Evaluations Group; and the use of evaluation. Drawing from evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office and the associated funds and programmes, chapter two presents key findings and lessons for organizational learning. The third and final chapter presents a programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2009-2010 for approval by the Executive Board.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to (a) take note of the report; (b) request UNDP to address the issues raised by evaluation; (c) request UNDP to strengthen decentralized evaluation capacity and increase its use; (d) request UNDP to support national evaluation capacity development; and (e) approve the programme of work for 2009-2010 proposed by the Evaluation Office.

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I. The evaluation function

1. The present annual report on evaluation is the third that the Evaluation Office of UNDP has presented to the Executive Board since the approval of UNDP evaluation policy in June 2006. The priorities of the Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of the associated funds and programmes during the reporting period included: to improve the quality of independent evaluations; to provide enhanced evaluative evidence through expanded coverage; to support capacity development at the decentralized level; and to contribute the United Nations reform agenda by participating in and leading initiatives under the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

2. The report highlights the efforts and progress made, and outlines the challenges encountered, in implementing the principles and norms of the evaluation policy across the organization. Findings from this report and the past two annual reports will serve as critical inputs to the first independent review of the evaluation policy, to be presented to the Executive Board at its second regular session 2009.

A. The UNDP Evaluation Office

Quality

3. The 2007 annual report on evaluation identified quality, timeliness and standardizing procedures as areas requiring improvement in the conduct of independent evaluations by the Evaluation Office. During the reporting period, the Evaluation Office focused on addressing those shortcomings with a number of initiatives.

4. The methodology of the country-level programme evaluations, known as the assessment of development results, has been enhanced and harmonized across all of them. For example, the contribution made by UNDP to United Nations coordination is assessed using a uniform set of criteria. The updated assessment of development results guide to procedures and methodology reflects those improvements. This has increased the methodological rigour of the evaluations and will permit the distilling of lessons learned and good practices in a systematic manner. The improvements also positioned the Evaluation Office to implement the expanded coverage of the assessments of development results. The Evaluation Office has codified good practices and identified measures for improving the technical quality of thematic evaluations. Evaluation experts from the United Nations, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, and national governments provided valuable inputs in developing a new thematic evaluation guide.

5. To improve the skills and knowledge of its staff, the Evaluation Office organized seminars by renowned experts. The topics include impact evaluations, concept mapping and case-study methods. Knowledge and technical inputs gained through those learning opportunities contributed to methodological advancement.

6. The Evaluation Office institutionalized an external quality assurance system. For every assessment of development results, two expert reviewers provided professional and objective comments on the first draft. The evaluations benefited from professional and objective comments provided by the reviewers. Advisory panels, in place for all thematic evaluations, review the evaluation design and the draft report.

7. To improve gender and geographical balance in the evaluation teams, the Evaluation Office has begun to make a concerted effort to recruit more female evaluators and professionals from programme countries. However, there is room for improvement. Eighty per cent of the team leaders recruited in 2008 are from donor countries. There has been more success at the team-member level, where 35 per cent of international consultants come from programme countries. The joint evaluation of the

role and contribution of the United Nations system in South Africa is a model in including a high proportion of national evaluators on its team. The team leader and one of the two deputy team leaders were from South Africa. Further, four out of five thematic specialists were South African. As a result, the evaluation built on a basis of deeper contextual knowledge than most external teams. The Evaluation Office is working to identify and engage qualified national institutions and professionals in evaluation.

8. Regarding gender, there is near-parity for international consultants. However, women are significantly underrepresented in team-leader positions (28 per cent), while more are recruited as team members (68 per cent). Among national consultants, the majority is male (92 per cent). There is a need to identify qualified female national consultants and women who can serve as team leaders.

9. The timeliness of the assessment of development results improved in 2008. Through extensive consultation with the regional bureaux, only countries whose new programmes would be presented to the Executive Board in 2009 were selected as subject to evaluation. The Evaluation Office made the draft assessments of development results available to country offices and their national partners in time to prepare new country programmes.[1] The stakeholder workshops, held at the end of the process, were to be completed by April 2009 for all assessments conducted in 2008, so that final reports would be available before the annual session, at which new country programmes are reviewed.

10. To maximize the impact of the stakeholder workshops, the Evaluation Office encouraged the participation of high-level UNDP representatives. The openness of senior UNDP managers demonstrated a commitment to programmatic improvement, transparency and accountability for results. The participation of regional bureaux at senior levels was critical in ensuring follow-up support and guidance to country offices.

11. As a follow up to the environment and energy thematic evaluation, the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the World Bank, engaged stakeholders and the public in a discussion on the role of multilateral institutions in the field of environment and sustainable development.

Coverage

12. The Evaluation Office conducts independent evaluations of global, regional and country programmes approved by the Executive Board and outcomes identified in the UNDP strategic plan. To support informed decision-making, the Evaluation Office significantly expanded its 2008-2009 programme of work. In particular, the coverage of assessments of development results increased by more than 100 per cent. Nine were completed in Afghanistan, Argentina, Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Guatemala, the Philippines, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, compared to four in the previous year.

13. The Evaluation Office evaluated one regional cooperation framework in the Arab States, and the third global cooperation framework of UNDP, as well as one outcome in the thematic evaluation of the role and contribution of UNDP in environment and energy.

[1] The Philippines assessment of development results fed into a two-year country programme extension, and the stakeholder workshop will be held in mid 2009.

Support to culture of evaluation in UNDP

14. As custodian of the evaluation function, the Evaluation Office supported UNDP efforts to improve the culture of evaluation. The Evaluation Office has prepared biannual briefs to alert UNDP management to issues arising from the evaluations. Recognizing the importance of strengthening oversight in evaluation, UNDP developed a directive to reinforce the roles and oversight responsibilities of the regional bureaux with respect to country offices. A principal outcome of the briefs is a plan of action, developed jointly by the Operations Support Group and the Evaluation Office. It proposes improvements in the UNDP programming guide and management actions to strengthen the culture and use of evaluation.

15. In close collaboration with the Operations Support Group and the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), the Evaluation Office has revised the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results (2002)* to reflect the requirements and principles of the evaluation policy and emerging trends in development evaluation. Since results planning is a prerequisite for effective monitoring and evaluation, the revised handbook integrates planning, monitoring and evaluation in a single guide. A workshop was held in late 2008 to review the first draft, with senior managers, programme officers and monitoring and evaluation specialists from country offices and regional bureaux.

16. To support management accountability in evaluation, the Evaluation Office maintained a web-based publicly accessible database of evaluations, known as the Evaluation Resources Centre.[2] Programme units[3] upload their evaluation plans, terms of reference, reports and management responses directly into the database. In 2008, the database was expanded to include the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. By the end of the reporting period it contained over 1,060 evaluation reports and 400 terms of reference, representing a 33 and a 51 per cent increase, respectively, over the previous year

17. The Evaluation Office collaborated with the Bureau of Management to include an indicator on management response compliance in the online management 'dashboard' for UNDP senior management. The dashboard is updated daily, using data that programme units enter into the Evaluation Resources Centre. It is hoped that this will foster management discipline in evaluation across the organization.

18. The Evaluation Office hosts an 'e-knowledge' network of UNDP, called EvalNet, to support knowledge management and community of practitioners in evaluation. In 2008, 236 new members subscribed to EvalNet, for a total membership of 1,226. A full-time network facilitator was recruited to support cross-fertilization of knowledge with other corporate knowledge networks. Challenges and good practices in monitoring and evaluation were shared among the networks through cross-posted messages.

19. The Evaluation Office provided programme units with advisory services on an as-requested basis and intensified its support to a growing number of evaluation specialists at the regional and country levels to facilitate their start-up. The Evaluation Office conducted training on evaluation for more than 150 UNDP staff members across the organization. In 2009, the Evaluation Office is coordinating its efforts with relevant headquarter bureaux to strengthen advisory services for country offices in planning, monitoring and evaluation for results.

[2] Available at erc.undp.org

[3] Includes country offices, regional bureaux, and policy and practice units at headquarters

Resources

20. The budget and staffing of the Evaluation Office increased in 2008. The biennium budget of $17.6 million was approved for 2008-2009, $7.72 million of which was allocated for 2008. The 2009 allocation stands at $9.17 million, making the 2008-2009 allocation $16.89 million. In 2008 $6.4 million was spent, representing a 45 per cent increase from the previous year. The Evaluation Office was supported by 23 staff members, representing an increase of three professional and two support staff. This increase was required to expand assessments of development results coverage.

B. The United Nations Evaluation Group[4]

21. The Evaluation Office continued its strong support to the rigorous agenda of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) for advancing United Nations system-wide coherence, quality and innovation in evaluation. In 2008, the Director served her second year as the elected chair. UNDP hosts the UNEG secretariat, managed by the Deputy Director of the Evaluation Office, who acts as UNEG Executive Coordinator. The UNEG work programme for 2008 was implemented by eleven task forces. UNDP co-chaired task forces on training, the joint evaluation in South Africa, and country-level evaluation. The Evaluation Office staff members participated in initiatives concerning the evaluability of 'delivering as one' pilots, a joint evaluation of the role of the United Nations in South Africa, impact evaluations, and the enhancement of evaluation quality. UNEG initiatives are integrated in the plan of work and individual performance plans of Evaluation Office staff members.

22. UNEG made a useful contribution to United Nations reform by conducting an evaluability study of the eight 'delivering as one' pilot countries. The studies, completed in 2008, were the first of a three-stage process and served as a technical assessment of the evaluation parameters of the pilots. They identified early strengths and weaknesses in the design and implementation of the pilot initiatives to feed into early corrective measures and results-oriented monitoring. UNDP was a member of the management group and supported the exercise as UNEG secretariat.

23. UNDP was a co-coordinator, with the Government of South Africa, of the UNEG members of the joint evaluation management group to evaluate the role and contribution of the United Nations system in South Africa. The evaluation assessed the effectiveness and contribution of the United Nations system to long-term development in South Africa. Preliminary findings were presented at a national stakeholder workshop in November 2008, and the draft report was shared widely among key national players and senior management of both resident and non-resident United Nations organizations for comment. The report, to be finalized in mid 2009, should provide lessons to guide future nationally led evaluations and could serve as a model whereby the United Nations collaborates with national institutions to share the responsibility and ownership for evaluation.

24. To harmonize and strengthen the evaluation function, UNEG developed ethical guidelines that expand on the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation. At the evaluation practice exchange seminar, UNDP presented a pilot 'quality assessment tool' for decentralized evaluations, which led to a new working group to develop a UNEG-wide quality assessment instrument for evaluation reports.

[4] UNEG is a professional network comprised of 43 units responsible for evaluation in the organizations of t United Nations system.

25. As a co-chair of the training task force, UNDP contributed to professionalizing evaluation. UNDP played a key role in institutionalizing an introductory course on evaluation in the United Nations system. Thirty-five UNDP staff participated in four training sessions during the reporting period. UNDP led in defining the framework for partnership between UNEG and the United Nations systems Staff College to develop and deliver of a comprehensive training programme on evaluation. The task force is conducting a 'learning needs assessment' for the programme.

C. Associated funds and programmes

United Nations Capital Development Fund

26. The Evaluation Unit in UNCDF reports directly to the Executive Secretary to preserve the independence of the evaluation function. Evaluations are managed by an Evaluation Adviser and an Evaluation Officer, and are conducted by teams of consultants. In 2008, UNCDF allocated $620,000 for evaluations, which are funded from the respective project budgets.

27 The Evaluation Unit commissioned three evaluations of UNCDF local development programmes in Burkina Faso, Haiti and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In November, UNCDF launched the evaluation of the regional programme 'Building Inclusive Financial Sectors in Africa', with three case studies, in Liberia, Madagascar and Togo. Increased attention is being paid to organizing joint evaluations: the evaluation in Haiti was conducted in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency, which co-funded the programme, while the evaluation in Burkina Faso was cost-shared with the Belgian Survival Fund.

28. UNCDF adopted a uniform process of advertising all evaluation consultancy opportunities for transparency and competitiveness in the selection of consultants. Following an experiment in outsourcing the management of consultants to a commercial company, UNCDF arranged to use the services of the United Nations Office for Project Services for improved cost-effectiveness and efficiency in contracting external consultancy support for evaluations. The Evaluation Unit remains responsible for the guidance of all evaluations. This new arrangement will be reviewed at the end of 2009.

29. UNCDF started to use the Evaluation Resources Centre management response system. A management response for the evaluation in Burkina Faso was uploaded to the database. Formulation and follow-up of management responses has been made a priority in UNCDF for decision-making, knowledge management and accountability. UNCDF is taking steps to ensure that assessments of development results include an assessment of the contribution of UNCDF in the countries in which it provides support.

30. UNCDF co-chaired the task force on the distinctiveness of evaluation function in relation to other functions, which developed a position paper for presentation at the 2009 UNEG annual meeting. UNCDF also participated in the task force working on a roster of evaluation consultants and contributed to its framework and content.

United Nations Development Fund for Women

31. In 2008, the Evaluation Unit in the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was supported by the Evaluation Advisor, who reported directly to the Executive Director, one new staff member and three consultants. The Unit completed the process of recruiting an evaluation analyst and two regional evaluation specialists, who will join the organization in 2009. The total budget for 2008 was $908,132.40.

32. The unit initiated four corporate evaluations (one of which was completed during the reporting period) following an open competitive tendering process; one meta-evaluation of twenty six evaluations; nine reviews; and eight other assessments completed between 2004 and 2008. The unit contributed to two joint evaluations.

33. The UNIFEM evaluation strategy, 2008-2011, which was developed in 2008, established four principal objectives for the work of UNIFEM in evaluation: conducting high quality evaluations; strengthening the evaluation capacities of staff and partners; participating in United Nations evaluation processes; promoting a gender perspective in evaluation practice; and establishing a process for evaluating the UNIFEM strategic plan. An evaluation policy was developed for approval in 2009.

34. The unit continued to work on developing evaluation plans that are compatible with the Evaluation Resources Centre to facilitate integration of UNIFEM evaluations by mid 2009. UNIFEM introduced decentralized evaluation plans and a guidance document to support the development of the plans and completed management responses for three evaluations. Those efforts resulted in 37 planned decentralized evaluations and assessments. Seven decentralized evaluations were completed in 2008.

35. A number of evaluation tools, such as an evaluation budget calculation template, a stakeholder analysis template, an interview guide for evaluation teams, and a draft guidance note on the development of terms of reference for decentralized evaluations integrating gender equality and human rights principles, have been developed. The unit initiated the design of an evaluation capacity-building project for staff and partners, including the development of a web-based evaluation manual and a training programme, in partnership with Carleton University. UNIFEM is developing a system to track improvements in its internal evaluation capacity.

36. The Evaluation Unit is an active member of five UNEG task forces, on human rights and gender equality; training; the 'delivering as one' evaluation; the evaluation roster; and the impact evaluation. It participated in the joint Development Assistance Committee/UNEG task force on the Office of Internal Oversight Services peer review. As the co-chair of the task force, UNIFEM provided financial and technical support towards the development of the UNEG *Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in Evaluations in the United Nations System*, which was presented to the annual general meeting of UNEG in March 2009.

United Nations Volunteers

37. The UNV Evaluation Unit operated with four staff and saw a 31 per cent budget increase – to $202,150 – 94 per cent of which was allocated to evaluation and 6 per cent to performance measurement. The evaluation function in UNV is largely funded by the Special Voluntary Fund, a general contribution fund that supports critical research and the piloting of innovative approaches to strengthen volunteerism for development. To enhance capacity, particularly in conducing more thematic evaluations, one additional evaluation specialist post was created, making a total of five staff members in 2009.

38. UNV programme units completed six decentralized evaluations: five final evaluations and one mid-term evaluation. One final evaluation was completed jointly with UNIFEM, on incorporating a gender perspective into budgets in Latin America. The remaining five were: country-level programmes in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Togo Ukraine, and one regional programme in south-eastern Europe. The Evaluation Unit of UNV did not complete independent evaluations; it focused on capacity development through training and the development of guidance, and on fostering learning from evaluations.

39. The handbook *Methodology to Assess the Contribution of Volunteerism to Development*, which incorporates the experience gained from volunteerism for development results workshops in 2007, was finalized for dissemination in early 2009.

40. In 2009, UNV will develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy, building on the UNV 'corporate plan' and programming strategy, which are being finalized. The unit supported programme staff in preparing project-level results frameworks and terms of reference for evaluations and finalizing evaluation reports to enhance knowledge of

evaluation and its strategic importance in programming. To strengthen learning from evaluations, UNV prepared knowledge products such as a synthesis of evaluations undertaken in 2006 and 2007 and a template for evaluation briefs. UNV is preparing briefs and a synthesis report of evaluations undertaken from 2000 to 2008. Drawing from the UNEG training initiative and the new handbook, the unit is developing a training programme for staff, in collaboration with programme sections, to foster their sense of ownership and relevance.

41. UNV management responses to the 2008 evaluations have been prepared and uploaded to the Evaluation Resources Centre, and follow-up actions have been tracked and reflected in the system. To support the introduction of the management response system, the Evaluation Unit has facilitated discussions to raise awareness of its importance for accountability and learning from evaluation. It has offered extensive peer-to-peer support for preparing management responses, and the topic will be included in the forthcoming UNV planning, monitoring and evaluation training.

42. UNV is an active member of the UNEG task forces on human rights and gender equality, country-level evaluation, and the evaluation roster. UNV has volunteered to undergo a UNEG peer review of its evaluation function. That process is expected to generate information that will help UNV to strengthen its evaluation process.

D. Programme units

Coverage

43. Evaluations commissioned by programme units, called 'decentralized' evaluations, are essential to support informed decision-making for future programmatic improvement. They also support management oversight and accountability to stakeholders and partners. Programme units are required by the evaluation policy to develop an evaluation plan for the programme period, commission planned outcome, project and other types of evaluations to external evaluators, prepare management responses, and make them available in the Evaluation Resources Centre. Unit managers are responsible for ensuring the quality of the evaluations and providing adequate resources to commission them.

44. During the reporting period, 50 per cent of country offices carried out 158 evaluations, including 24 outcome evaluations. Despite a decline in the total number, the proportion of country offices with at least one evaluation did not change significantly. This means that, on average, each country conducted slightly fewer evaluations. Among countries that conducted at least one evaluation, the average number of evaluations per country was fairly consistent among regions – between 1.8 and 2.6. This is a marked difference from last year with a much wider range of 2.2 to 4.6. As in previous years, most reports completed were project evaluations (77 per cent).

45. Consistent with last year, the Asia and the Pacific and the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) regions had the two highest percentages of country offices with an evaluation (71 and 72 per cent respectively). Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States had the highest percentage of countries with an outcome evaluation (24 per cent), while Africa had the lowest (9 per cent).

Table 1. Completed evaluations in country offices

2007 Global (137)		2008 Global (137)	Regions (No. of countries with evaluation plans)				
			Africa (45)	Arab States (18)	Asia and the Pacific (24)	Europe and the CIS (25)	Latin America and the Caribbean (25)
183	Total number of evaluations in 2008	158	33	18	44	43	20
137	of which project evaluations	121	23	16	33	36	13
28	of which outcome evaluations	24	5	2	8	6	3
18	of which other evaluations	13	5	0	3	1	4
15%	Percentage of outcome evaluations in total evaluations	15%	15%	11%	18%	14%	15%
51%	Percentage of countries with at least one evaluation of any type	50%	33%	39%	71%	72%	44%
14%	Percentage of countries with at least one outcome evaluation	15%	9%	11%	21%	24%	12%
1.3	Average number of evaluations per country	1.2	0.7	1.0	1.8	1.7	0.8
2.6	Average number of evaluations per country that conducted at least one evaluation of any type	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.6	2.4	1.8

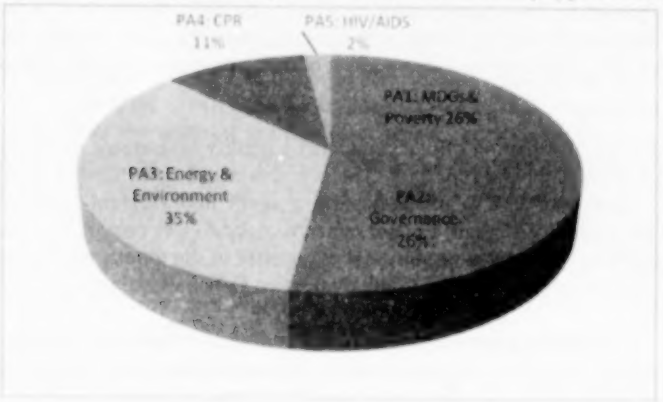
46. The thematic coverage of evaluations was similar to last year. The practice area[5] with the largest number of evaluations was energy and environment, with 34 per cent, while the thematic area accounted for only 9 per cent of programmatic expenditures in 2007.[6] The rigorous evaluation requirements for projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) may be the reason for this result. Fifty-two per cent of all evaluations were in the combined areas of Millennium Development Goals and poverty and democratic governance, which together accounted for approximately 74 per cent of programme expenditures.

47. The regional bureaux and policy and practice bureaux are also required to conduct evaluations of their respective policies and programmes. During the reporting period, they conducted only two evaluations: BDP completed the evaluation of the democratic governance thematic trust fund, and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States carried out one outcome evaluation of its regional cooperation framework.

[5] Reference is made to multi-year funding framework (MYFF) practice areas, as opposed to the results areas of the strategic plan, for reporting purposes since all evaluations assessed UNDP interventions during the MYFF period.

[6] UNDP annual report 2008 (http://www.undp.org/publications/annualreport2008)

Figure 1: Thematic coverage of 145 evaluations of any type in 2008[7]



Compliance

48. The evaluation policy mandates that programme units conduct outcome evaluations identified in their evaluation plans during their respective programme cycles. Of 15 country programmes that ended in 2008, nine countries were fully compliant (see table 2).

Table 2: Outcome evaluation compliance

Region	No. of countries subject to compliance	Compliant*	Partially compliant**	Non-compliant***
Africa	8	5	1	2
Arab States	3	2	1	-
Asia and the Pacific	1	1	-	-
Europe and the CIS	0	-	-	-
Latin America and the Caribbean	3	1	1	1
Global	**15**	**9**	**3**	**3**

* Completed all planned outcome evaluations
** Completed at least one, but not all, planned outcome evaluations
*** Did not complete any planned outcome evaluations

49. Findings of the audits conducted by the Office of Audit and Investigation highlight weak compliance in planning and undertaking outcome evaluations. Of the total 701 audit recommendations made in 2008, 13 were made directly in response to the absence of planned outcome evaluations or their delayed execution. In 2008, as the coverage of the assessments of development results increased, the absence of outcome evaluations posed challenges to the evaluation teams. They had to spend much of their limited time collecting basic evaluative material rather than focusing on analysis.

50. There have been some improvements in recent evaluation planning. To provide adequate evaluative evidence for accountability and learning, programme units are advised to plan and conduct at least one outcome evaluation in each practice area. This means, in general, that each country programme should plan two to four outcome

[7] Only includes evaluations that have a MYFF practice area indicated in the Evaluation Resources Centre.

evaluations.[8] The number of outcome evaluations planned for the country programmes approved in 2007 ranged from zero to 15. In 2008, the number of outcome evaluations planned was more consistent and realistic across the plans, ranging from two to six. This suggests an enhanced understanding of outcome evaluation compliance and oversight.

Quality

51. The Evaluation Office conducted a quality assessment of 18 outcome evaluations that were completed in 2008. The percentages of reports rated satisfactory and above increased from 34 to 39, indicating a slight improvement from last year. However, uneven quality remains a major concern, since 61 per cent of the reports were less than satisfactory. Findings suggest that the quality of the reports tends to be higher when the evaluators make reference to the Evaluation Office guidelines in the report (see table 3).

Table 3: Summary of outcome evaluation ratings by quality criteria[9]

	Rating		Quality criteria						
2007 overall		*2008 overall*	*Report structure and presentation*	*Evaluation subject and context*	*Evaluation objectives and criteria*	*Evaluation design and methodology*	*Findings*	*Conclusions*	*Recommen-dations and lessons*
3 (17%)	Highly satisfactory	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)
1 (6%)	Satisfactory	3 (17%)	2 (11%)	4 (22%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	4 (22%)	5 (28%)
2 (11%)	Moderately satisfactory	2 (11%)	--	1 (6%)	--	--	--	1 (6%)	--
2 (11%)	Moderately unsatisfactory	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	7 (39%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	5 (28%)	6 (33%)
8 (44%)	Unsatisfactory	8 (44%)	7 (39%)	5 (28%)	3 (17%)	2 (11%)	7 (39%)	5 (28%)	3 (17%)
2 (11%)	Highly unsatisfactory	2 (11%)	--	--	6 (33%)	9 (50%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)

52. Similarly to last year, analysis of the ratings relative to each criterion assessed suggests that the evaluation reports are by far weakest in terms of evaluation design and methodology, followed by findings. Seventy-two per cent of the reports were rated less than satisfactory with respect to the criterion on evaluation design and methodology. Although most reports identified data sources, they did not appear to have been based on sound evaluation approach and design, lacking a clear rationale for their approach to answering the evaluation questions.

53. An independent study on the quality of decentralized UNDP evaluations conducted by the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation, with facilitation from the UNDP Evaluation Office, called for organizational efforts to improve the uneven quality of evaluations. More attention needs to be paid to planning, as poor programme design leads to weak evaluations. The findings of the report generated discussions on EvalNet regarding the corporate commitment to evaluation capacity development. As a step forward, the revised handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluation includes a comprehensive chapter on evaluation methods and design to guide UNDP staff and evaluators in ensuring professional standards of quality.

[8] Most country programmes operate with two to four practice or results areas.

[9] The table presents the number and percentage of reports by rating received for each quality criterion.

E. Capacity

UNDP

54. The Evaluation Office gathered information on existing capacity from country offices. The data confirmed their efforts to professionalize the monitoring and evaluation function. Over the year, the number of dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialists increased from 38 to 46. In particular, the Africa region witnessed a notable increase, from eight to 13. Only 78 per cent of the specialists supported solely the monitoring and evaluation of the country programmes. Most specialists work at different levels: 52 per cent supported the United Nations country team at the level of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); and 50 per cent in the context of a particular thematic area, project or trust fund[10]. The number of dedicated units also increased slightly, from 30 to 31 (see table 4).

Table 4: Evaluation capacity in country offices in 2008

Region and no. of countries	2008 Global (137)	Africa (45)	Arab States (18)	Asia Pacific (24)	Europe CIS (25)	Latin America (25)
No. and % of dedicated M&E specialists in total country offices per region	46 (34%)	13 (29%)	6 (33%)	13 (54%)	2 (8%)	12 (48%)
No. and % of M&E units in total country offices per region	31 (23%)	8 (18%)	2 (11%)	11 (46%)	0 (0%)	10 (40%)

M&E = Monitoring and evaluation

55. As regional-level demand for advisory services in monitoring and evaluation rises, the regional bureaux have demonstrated their commitment to establishing a dedicated specialist post in the regions. However, progress has been mixed. The Regional Bureau for Africa is the only one with such capacity, having three advisors (one in the headquarters and two in the regional centres in Dakar and Johannesburg). The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States are each in the process of recruiting a specialist at their respective regional offices. The Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States has discontinued its adviser post.

56. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery has a specialist based in Geneva, supported by another officer who dedicates 25 per cent of her time to monitoring and evaluation in New York. Together they develop and operationalize a monitoring and evaluation system for the bureau and support county offices in enhancing monitoring and evaluation within their crisis prevention and recovery programmes. In line with its evaluation plan, the bureau is conducting its evaluation of the impact of UNDP disaster risk reduction interventions, covering 2002 to present, in a set of high-risk countries. Other policy and practice bureaux, including BDP, the Bureau of Management, and the Partnerships Bureau, had no dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialist for their respective programme or strategy, nor an evaluation plan in 2008.

57. Discussions on EvalNet in mid 2008 highlighted a number of constraints in evaluation capacity at the country level. Despite an increasing trend towards the professionalization of monitoring and evaluation in the country offices, there is still a predominance of focal point arrangements for evaluation. Where there is dedicated monitoring and evaluation expertise in the office, its location in the office and its reporting line influence its effectiveness; those whose reporting structures are layers away from senior management have only a limited effect on decision-making.

[10] These responsibilities are not always mutually exclusive.

Monitoring and evaluation personnel are often hired on non-core funded short-term contracts, which inhibits the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system and its sustainability.

58. Some country offices have taken measures to improve quality and capacity in monitoring and evaluation. Based on guidance provided by the Evaluation Office, monitoring and evaluation officers in Nepal and Peru have developed a resource package for programme staff in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and have conducted training sessions for their respective staff and government partners.

59. Resources allocated for monitoring and evaluation at the country level are often insufficient, since an adequate budget for evaluation activities is not always included in programme design. Securing funding for outcome evaluations continues to be difficult, and donors or partner governments who cost-share projects often require or favour project evaluations over outcome evaluations. Ensuring adequate institutional capacity and financial resources for evaluation requires strong leadership on the part of senior management in country offices. Further, monitoring and evaluation should be a core function of the organization, resourced and supported accordingly.

Support to national evaluation capacity

60. Various units of UNDP have responded to the fast-growing demand from programme governments and partners for support in national evaluation capacity development. UNDP country offices provided support through programmatic interventions, focused primarily on building national monitoring and evaluation systems; developing monitoring and reporting skills to track and evaluate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and national development goals; and creating monitoring and evaluation systems for development interventions. In Cambodia and Uganda, UNDP supported national efforts to monitor and report on the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP Tajikistan is supporting the Ministry of Economy and Statistical Agency to develop their capacity to monitor and evaluate the indicators reflected in the poverty reduction strategy paper and the national development strategy.

61. The Evaluation Office contributed to the development of evaluation culture and capacity in the countries where evaluations were carried out. For example, during the stakeholder workshop of the assessment of development results in Benin, a discussion with the Minister of State in charge of planning, development and evaluation of public policies and programmes resulted in a request from the Government for UNDP to support evaluation capacity development. As a first step, the regional evaluation adviser based in Dakar is leading a needs assessment. The Evaluation Office also made contributions through the ongoing activities of UNEG. Approximately 10 government and national partners benefited from the UNEG training programme in 2008. The evaluability study of the 'delivering as one' pilot in Rwanda led to the establishment of the first independent evaluation entity in the Government.

62. Despite these ongoing initiatives, the growing demand outstrips the existing support and UNDP capacity. For better coordination and optimal impact of the various efforts, a UNDP strategy to support national evaluation capacity development is needed.

F. Use of evaluations and follow-up

63. The Evaluation Office worked closely with evaluators to enhance the clarity and strategic nature of evaluation recommendations. As stakeholder workshops of the assessments of development results engage partners in an intensive discussion of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, they have proved immensely helpful in ensuring the effective use of evaluation in designing a new country programme. Discussions at the stakeholder workshops also help the Evaluation Office sharpen the recommendations and make them more strategic and actionable. The engagement of stakeholders through the workshops and the improved quality of recommendations may have contributed to the clarity of management responses to the assessments of development results.

64. UNDP has introduced a management response system to transparently track how evaluations are being used throughout the organization. The evaluation policy requires UNDP management to prepare and upload a management response to each evaluation into the Evaluation Resources Centre. The preparation and submission to the Executive Board of management responses to independent evaluations has been institutionalized. However, only 54 per cent of the independent evaluations completed since 2006 had a management response entered or tracked in the Evaluation Resource Center. UNDP needs to pay more attention to improving the accountability and transparency of follow-up to evaluations.

65. At the decentralized level, the practice of preparing a management response and making it publicly available has not yet gained a foothold. Only 31 per cent of decentralized evaluations completed since 2006 have a management response in the Evaluation Resources Centre. Of all evaluations completed during the reporting period, 35% of them have a management response. Despite an improvement over last year (21 per cent), this falls far short of 100 per cent compliance.

II. Key findings and lessons learned from independent evaluations[11]

A. Substantive capacities for policy advice

66. UNDP has made a concerted effort in recent years to bolster internal capacities to provide expert policy advice. While significant gains have been made in this area, as noted by some assessments for development results, such as Argentina, evaluations have shown that much more still needs to be done.

67. Nine independent evaluations[12] concluded that UNDP is often seen as an effective administrator of donor funds rather than a substantive development partner. In countries where a high proportion of the budget comes from the programme country, including Argentina, Botswana and Guatemala, evaluations point to the tendency of UNDP to become a service provider to the Government, at risk of being distracted from providing substantive policy advice in favour of the immediate financial gains earned by providing support services. In Afghanistan, UNDP staff members are recruited to manage funds rather than provide policy advice because of the reporting and administrative requirements required to run large programmes.

[11] See annex 1 for a list of independent evaluations completed by the Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of the associated funds and programmes. The assessments of development results in Benin and the Republic of the Congo were reported in the 2007 annual report, but lessons from these evaluations are incorporated in this report.

[12] Afghanistan, Argentina, Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Tajikistan, and environment and energy.

68. Evaluations found that UNDP should focus on building the substantive capacities of its staff and recruit more policy professionals to work alongside fund administrators.[13] The assessments of development results in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of the Congo suggest that more resources are needed at the country level to build capacity, conduct policy research for decision-makers and strengthen strategic partnerships with government and other partners.

B. National capacities and ownership for sustainability

69. The core mandate of UNDP centres on strengthening national capacities to address human development challenges. Various programme modalities and practices, however, can have a negative effect on the capacity development of national partners.

70. Where government capacity is not sufficiently strong, UNDP may have to engage in the administration of public funds over the short term. UNDP does not, however, always integrate the development of the capacity of national partners and institutions in these programmes. An over-reliance on UNDP direct implementation, particularly in the post-conflict countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of the Congo and Tajikistan, can hinder the development of capacities required to sustain the benefits of the initiatives after UNDP withdraws support. In particular, the use of UNDP business services, including procurement and recruitment, risks substituting the implementation capacity of national institutions instead of strengthening them.

71. Nearly every assessment of development results mentioned the lack of an exit strategy developed during the planning stage of initiatives. The sustainability of results is likely to be low without ex-ante handover strategies, well defined capacity development goals for national partners and strong national ownership, including a high level of senior government commitment. In the Republic of the Congo, the evaluation found that local institutions need to be willing and able to take over the long-term funding and human resource responsibility for programmes. In Burkina Faso, the evaluation found that local capacity-building was at the heart of the joint UNDP-UNCDF project[14] where communities contributed an average of 10.5 per cent to local development project funds.

72. A number of assessments of development results [15] showed that improved strategies are needed for partnering more effectively with civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance national ownership and sustainability of results. In countries such as the Philippines, where UNDP has partnered with CSOs in programme design, implementation and policy advocacy, the national ownership of the UNDP programme has been significantly enhanced. While some programmes have partnered well with CSOs[16], there is room to develop more areas of cooperation with the private sector.

73. The evaluation of the UNIFEM programme facilitating the implementation of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in South East Asia found that support of UNIFEM to the reporting process was particularly productive. It enabled government and civil society partners to participate actively in the preparation of reports, guaranteed the ownership of the process, and achieved results.

[13] Afghanistan, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, the Philippines, Uzbekistan and environment and energy

[14] Projet d'appui des ressources Agro-pastorales dans la province du Namentenga

[15] Afghanistan, Barbados and the OECS, Botswana, and the Republic of the Congo

[16] Guatemala, Tajikistan, and regional cooperation framework for the Arab States

C. Strategic focus and coherence

74. While most programmes were in line with the mandate of UNDP and national priorities, they often spread the portfolio too thinly or lacked focus. In particular, the evaluation of the third global cooperation framework found that its contribution to development results could have been strengthened by focusing on areas of high demand and where UNDP had a comparative advantage.

75. UNDP programmes have been largely relevant to national challenges. However, the evaluations found that there was often a missing link between the broad strategic goals and outcomes, and the associated projects and outputs. There is still a substantial gap between UNDP-defined objectives and their application at the country level.

76. The evaluation of environment and energy found that GEF funding availability has a great influence on UNDP priority-setting. UNDP managed its GEF portfolio well, but the programme countries have local priorities outside GEF global priorities. In Tajikistan and the Republic of the Congo, donor priorities influenced UNDP programming in the effort to mobilize resources locally, resulting in fragmented and unfocused programmes. Furthermore, non-core funding is unpredictable, making planning difficult, as was seen in the Philippines and Afghanistan assessments.

D. Programming strengths and weaknesses

77. *Neutrality*. UNDP is seen as an impartial development partner with a nearly universal global presence, which provides the organization with strategic advantages in facilitating policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and coordination for development results. Seven assessments of development results evaluations and one regional cooperation framework evaluation[17] highlighted the fact that this perceived neutrality allows UNDP to initiate dialogue in sensitive areas such as human rights and constitutional reform. In Argentina, UNDP harnessed its reputation to provide coordination for the 'Diálogo Argentino', a high-level forum convened by the President to strategize and develop a consensus around resolving the financial, social and political crisis of 2001-2002. One of the greatest value-added elements of the regional cooperation framework for the Arab States was in advocacy; it made policymakers and civil society familiar with some pressing and sensitive issues in governance and gender. Further, the neutrality of UNDP was a key reason cited in many evaluations, notably those of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, for serving as a reliable and important channel for donor funds when government institutions were recovering from conflict.

78. *Gender mainstreaming*. The experience of UNDP in Uzbekistan is modeled as a success story in working with all levels of government to develop a strategy on gender issues. As a result, women are increasingly serving as administrators and experts in planning and executing UNDP projects. However, seven evaluations[18] highlighted that gender has not been adequately mainstreamed into the programme work. The third global cooperation framework evaluation noted that, although internal capacity and understanding of gender issues has been strengthened, gender mainstreaming has been incomplete in all substantive practice areas in the framework. The Philippines assessment of development results found that gender principles were applied unevenly through the UNDP programme and often not analysed at the onset, nor included in individual work plans. As was indicated in the 2006 evaluation of gender mainstreaming

[17] Afghanistan, Argentina, Barbados and the OECS, Benin, Guatemala, the Philippines, Tajikistan, regional cooperation framework for the Arab States

[18] Barbados, Benin, Botswana, Guatemala, the Philippines, Tajikistan, third global cooperation framework

in UNDP, many evaluations showed a continued lack of senior-level gender expertise in country offices. This situation hinders the application of gender issues in programming.

79. *United Nations coordination.* UNDP has a mandate to coordinate efforts of UN organizations on the ground through the Resident Coordinator's office and is generally seen as an effective convener of divergent partners on the ground. While UNDP is effectively facilitating joint planning through the UNDAF, the ADRs[19] show few examples of implementation collaboration through joint programs. The Bosnia and Herzegovina ADR found that UNDP involves UN agencies during project formulation when required, but leaves little space for partnership during implementation. In the Guatemala ADR, more planning at the operational level is needed, as duplication of efforts is often seen among UN agencies.

80. *Results-based management principles.* The uneven application of results-based management principles in programming, monitoring and evaluation is a common theme in many evaluations.[20] Most individual projects in the country programmes achieved the stated outputs successfully, but it is less clear that UNDP contributed effectively to achieving outcomes. Common problems included: lack of clear criteria, indicators or baselines from which to build a credible evaluation; over-broad or grandiose outcome definitions; vague distinctions among outcomes, outputs and indicators; and poor formulation, testing and use of indicators in regular monitoring. The assessment of development results in the Republic of the Congo found that outcomes were often outputs, and indicators were defined qualitatively, making monitoring highly subjective. Outcomes, outputs and indicators must be clearly defined in the planning stage to contribute effectively to achieving sustainable results and to bring the use of results-based management to its full potential.

III. Programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2009-2010

81. The programme of work for the Evaluation Office is aligned with the UNDP strategic plan. Evaluations will be conducted to assess outcomes defined in the global, regional, country and other programmes approved by the Executive Board, and those defined in the goals, key results areas, cross-cutting issues and organizational principles in the strategic plan.

82. The coverage through evaluation will be selective and strategic. At least 15 assessments of development results will be conducted each year, and the global, regional and South-South programmes will be evaluated. Each goal and key results area will be covered, with attention to outcomes that are linked to strong demand from programme countries and a high level of UNDP investment. This will provide an opportunity for critical organizational learning and address vital emerging global development issues.

83. The evaluations will provide sufficient evaluative evidence to conduct a summative assessment of the strategic plan at the end of its period. The 2009-2010 programme of work is as follows:

[19] Afghanistan, Barbados and the OECS, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Congo, Guatemala, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan

[20] Barbados and the OECS, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Congo, the Philippines, Tajikistan, the UNIFEM evaluation on facilitating implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in South East Asia

(a) *Approved programme of work*

(i) Sixteen assessments of development results

(ii) One evaluation of a regional cooperation framework: the evaluation of the third regional cooperation framework in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2006-2010)

(iii) Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to strengthening national capacities in managing for development results, including the Millennium Development Goals

(iv) Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to decentralization and local governance

(v) Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to environmental management for poverty reduction: the nexus between poverty and environment

(vi) Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to recovery efforts in countries affected by natural disasters

(vii) Joint evaluation of the UNDP-United Nations Industrial Development Organization cooperation agreement

(viii) Evaluation of UNDP effectiveness in facilitating the use of global funds to achieve development results

(ix) Evaluation of the role and contribution of UNDP support to strengthening electoral systems and processes

(x) Evaluation of the UNDP regionalization process

(b) *Proposed programme of work*

(i) Fifteen assessments of development results

(ii) Three evaluations of the regional cooperation frameworks in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively

(iii) Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to poverty reduction

(iv) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan, 2008-2011

(c) *Support the culture of evaluation by:*

(i) Building evaluation capacity among UNDP staff and national partners through regional workshops and training on the revised evaluation handbook;

(ii) Managing and improving the Evaluation Resources Centre;

(iii) Managing EvalNet and developing evaluation knowledge products; and

(iv) Hosting and managing the secretariat of UNEG and contributing to the UNEG programme of work.